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FORMER LAW FIRM EMPLOYEE SENTENCED FOR EMBEZZLEMENT

Woman embezzles \$309,760.23 from employer

Lafayette, Louisiana . . . MARIE FERDETTE ARNAUD CART, age 49, from Lafayette, Louisiana was sentenced this week in federal court to three years imprisonment to be followed by three years supervised release by United States District Judge Richard T. Haik for mail fraud, announced United States Attorney Donald W. Washington. CART was also ordered to pay \$309,760.23 in restitution, of which she must pay a minimum of \$400 per month after her release from prison.

The Court made an upward departure in sentencing stating that the guideline range of 18-24 months was inadequate in this case because of the long term duration of the embezzlement as well as the extreme financial damage to victim and his family.

CART was indicted in March 2006 and pled guilty to the charge in September 2006 after investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation determined that CART embezzled over \$300,000 from her employer.

U.S. Attorney Washington stated, “We are very pleased with the sentence handed down by the Court against Ms. Cart. Her employer trusted her for many years, during which time she took advantage of her employer, his law firm, and his family. We hope that the victim is able to move forward knowing that Ms. Cart has been brought to justice.”

CART embezzled money from the attorney for which she was a long-term, trusted employee. CART was the office manager and bookkeeper since 1984 for Attorney David S. Cook, a sole practitioner lawyer in Lafayette, Louisiana. CART had authority to write checks and was responsible for handling all incoming funds as well as paying all of the firm’s as well as Mr. Cook’s personal bills. The attorney noticed a steady decline in his income over several years and became concerned about the firm’s future. He enlisted the assistance of a CPA to audit his financial records hoping to find a solution.

The CPA found that there were more than 1,000 false entrees or fraudulent withdrawals from Cook’s various accounts. Further investigations found that CART used a number of different methods to embezzle money from Cook’s accounts over many years. In addition to the bank accounts, CART fraudulently used an American Express card which was thought by the victim to have been canceled in 1989. CART utilized the credit card to make personal purchases, and had the monthly statement mailed to her personal mailing address. She then used Cook’s bank accounts to pay the American Express balance.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James T. McManus.

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